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THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

A Magazine Devoted to
The Living of the Higher Life

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(*a*) To form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour;

(*b*) The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and

(*c*) The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

सत्यात् नास्ति परो धर्मः ।

"There is no Religion higher than Truth"

THE THEOSOPHICAL MOVEMENT

Vol. 63, No. 4 February 1993

THE BASIS OF A LIVING MORALITY

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> The aim and object of this command is the love which springs from a clean heart, from a good conscience, and from a faith that is genuine.
>
> —*I. Timothy*, I, 5

STUDENTS of Theosophy are often told that it is wrong to condemn a fellow-pilgrim even though his guilt is beyond dispute. On the face of it and according to worldly codes, a man would be within his rights to condemn if the transgression is proved. Why is the Theosophical position so radically different? It is submitted that a little attention to human relations would demonstrate to us the reason for the divergence of views of those who are worldly and those who are the students of Theo-Sophia, which is Wisdom about God or Divine Wisdom.

The ordinary man of our age treats others as a sharer with him in nature's bounty. It is there to be plundered. If by his efforts—whether through vile, strength, or cajoling—he secures a larger share for himself, why then, he merits that much advantage and is entitled to steal a march upon his neighbour. Suppose he does come across a skeleton in his neighbour's cupboard, can he not use it to "warn" others or to "segregate" the transgressor and so protect the "cause"? Can he not bring the wrongdoer to justice if the transgression is patent and needs no elaborate proof? Shall he not act thus and if, incidentally, he gets his own desire fulfilled, who shall reproach him or say him nay? We shall of course not consider the cases of those others who under the guise of an assumed virtue expose the weaknesses of others

with the ultimate motive of gaining favour, office or fortune. As Carlyle would have said, let us forgive them and as soon as possible, let us forget them.

Theosophy does not view human relationships in the same manner as does the average man in the street. Wnen a person—be he saint or sinner—becomes a student of the Philosophy, he by that act forges an unseen and ofttimes unknown link with the Custodians of that Philosophy, and with every other student through the common link that binds them to the same Custodians. The relationship is in some degrees akin to that which obtains in a classroom of infants. For the children, this is their little world and they react to the laughter and tears of any unit of their little group. They are, for considerable periods of time, submerged in the group, and the group reflects itself in their thoughts and behaviour. In the higher school of the perennial wisdom, it is more or less the same. The student through his aspiration lights his lamp, and his light is in no wise different from the light in the lamp of his co-disciples. For even an instant of time his consciousness has vibrated in unison with the united consciousness of the whole band of students, known and unknown, near or scattered, meeting in open and yet unsuspected places or in spots on earth inaccessible to the ordinary man. To put it in materialistic parlance, the student establishes a direct channel of communication—a pipeline—which, starting from himself, reaches out to the Teacher. Since each true student has perforce to establish this connection, he by this very act becomes connected with every other co-student, for the conduit of each student finds its outlet in the junction-box of the Teacher. Griefs and joys, achievements and failures now become in reality the common possession of this truly joint-family system.

Once that this close bond is admitted and its results envisaged, several corollaries ensue. These could be roughly analysed thus:

(1) For each system of thought that is capable of attracting and holding the minds of men, there would be a focus of attraction that binds the individual to the group and that exercises a cohesive pull on either the spiritual, the psychic, the mental or emotional planes of consciousness.

(2) Through that focus, a magnetic bond is forged between each unit of the group through their subscribing to a common aim, purpose and teaching.

(3) Whether one likes it or not, each unit strengthens or diminishes the cohesive force of the group. Tolerance and adherence to truth and morality are *sine qua non* for the survival of any group such as the U.L.T. The bond once forged, persists over a length of time and cannot be snapped by a mere wish or decision. The only way by which a person can put himself out of the circle of attraction is by generating a force that throws him out of that orbit. The rupture in such cases is violent and leaves scars both on the group and on the individual.

(4) The cohesive force has a tensile strength of its own, and unless revitalized from time to time, declines or wastes through age or disuse. However, the greatest corrosive force for any group is disunity—a disregard for the best interests of any other unit of the same group.

(5) The backslider vitiates the atmosphere of the whole group and continues to do so until the link that connects him to the focus is snapped or severed. He may disown the group or the group may disown him, but the severing of the bond is not achieved by a mere declaration. The real snapping of ties occurs on the inner planes of being, and for quite some time thereafter the mental atmosphere becomes vitiated and no light comes—not at least till the cohesive force reasserts itself and magnetic affinities are restored. It may, however, be that the commotion produces a debility in the nucleus itself and that, losing its power to hold together, breaks up the group into antagonistic fragments and warring individuals.

It must therefore follow that when anyone ceases to be a mere inquirer and lights his light at the torch of Theosophy, certain effects are bound to ensue. The first stems from his adherence to the Teachings. The philosophy comes first and then follow the aim and the life. At this early stage, the place of the Guru is taken by the Teachings and by Madame Blavatsky who, whether in or outside of a physical body, remains at the head of the Movement. The lines of affinity are thus forged, slow or fast, primarily through the Teachings, with the Teacher, and then through the latter with the co-disciples. When the lines are clean and unimpeded, the whole group of students is benefited by the spirit of solidarity that overspreads it and protects it in every particular. However, the health of the group depends not merely on the acceptance of the teachings. Since this is no mere idle

exercise in metaphysics, the Philosophy brings to life the psychic and spiritual aspects of each student. Morality now assumes a new dimension. It no longer remains an outer embellishment to an inner degradation, a convenient mask to be put on for the public gaze. It becomes an inner vital aspect of the one who is awakening from ages of soul lethargy.

Morality is no mere man-made dictum of a day. It is, when viewed closely, the progressively self-revealing law which applies to each sphere, place and circumstance. It shows itself to be all-encompassing to the gaze of him who is not frightened at its sweep. The important thing to grasp is that the Law which moves the Universe is in no way different from the Law which governs the progression of man. It is only when man transgresses that the law becomes what he may choose to call punitive or retributive. Birth in environments pleasant or the reverse, congenital weaknesses and deformities in body, character and the psychic nature are but effects of the moral lapses of previous births. And this brings us to yet another aspect of the moral Law. For, that Law is INTELLIGENT. It chooses the time and distributes or breaks up the strength of the reaction so that at no time is one incapable of meeting and overcoming the reaction through the resources available to him. The Law is therefore in no sense punitive, but is invariably instructive and remedial.

That the Universe moves according to the fixed arithmetic of the spheres can no longer be denied or doubted. Science has moved too far and too fast in recent times to deny this. However, the discoveries that science makes are still unrelated to the norms and rules that govern one's conduct and behaviour. Law in its true sense is no mere catalogue that lists one's possible transgressions (such as are found in penal enactments and the laws of torts), neither can it be confined to the setting out of the properties and characteristics of the elements, the behaviour of forms of matter and the growth and evolution of plants, animals and men. The Commandments of the Gospels, the Laws of Manu, the formulation of duties according to the *Varna* (the colour or quality) of the person, are strange to our academicians who can find no basis for them in the shifting and deceptive knowledge with which they deal. Yet, it is these laws and these laws only which are formative of one's character and which permit the Soul to come into its own.

It should be readily understandable, in fact it should be axiomatic, that any law that governs conduct must be one that is congenial to the nature of the Soul and furthers its progress. Since we are dealing with "conduct" in the sense of the outward actions of the inner man—the Soul—we have to view the entire field and play of action from this one point of view only. Anything that goes against the inclinations of the pure soul or that frustrates it in its endeavour must be classed as essentially undesirable at lower levels and as sinful at degrees of consciousness where the person has the power to understand that he is deliberately violating laws of the Soul's being or is committing a sin against what the Scriptures term the Holy Ghost. Therefore, if we are to progress our studies further, it becomes necessary that we understand to some extent the source from which the Soul emanates, the instruments it uses to manifest its powers, and also the conditions of physical and psychic substances which can paralyse its efforts and deny it expression.

The Soul is an emanation, a light kindled at a sacred flame. Its parent source is ubiquitous, cannot be divided nor decimated and is itself an emanation or a ray of the Absolute. To bring this home to the neophyte, in the Catechism the Master is made to ask the pupil:

> "Lift thy head, oh Lanoo; dost thou see one, or countless lights above thee, burning in the dark midnight sky?"
>
> "I sense one Flame, oh Gurudeva, I see countless undetached sparks shining in it."
>
> "Thou sayest well. And now look around and into thyself. That light which burns inside thee, dost thou feel it different in anywise from the light that shines in thy Brother-men?"
>
> "It is no way different, though the prisoner is held in bondage by Karma, and though its outer garments delude the ignorant into saying, 'Thy Soul and My Soul.'"

Once that the truth of this is taken on faith—enlightened faith—certain corollaries come to be formulated. They can be thus set forth:

(1) Since all motion is circular, the emanated Souls must at some point of time be made to merge back into their parent source.

(2) Nothing that is impure or not consubstantial with that Source can ever penetrate to it, and if rejected must fail to be grafted on the Tree of Life Eternal.

(3) The evolution of matter goes on *pari passu* with the evolution

of the Soul, but is as distinct from it as the body from the mind or the mind from the Soul.

(4) The Soul has to bend the instruments of matter to its will and refuse to be led away by either the blandishments or the apparently meek submission of matter and material things.

(5) Outside of man there is unity in space, punctuality in time and purity in causation.

Granted the veracity of these concepts, it becomes imperative that the harmony that pervades the homogeneity be maintained. It is essential that the cycles be allowed to run their course and no action generated which would go counter to their flow. It becomes of the essence that motives remain pure and that they subserve the great homogeneity seen either as an entire whole or as broken up into harmonious points of Light or Consciousness. The laws that govern correct action would therefore lay down guidelines by which the letter and spirit of the Eternal Verities could be preserved. It therefore follows that a misshapen thought allowed to arise within one's brain-matter is bad—of the nature of evil—for in the ultimate analysis it works either towards the detriment of one unit or provides a wrongful gain or satisfaction to another, and is by that reason antagonistic to the homogeneous whole. The equilibrium that is harmony is destroyed because the minutest vibration of an antagonistic thought is registered in the medium where thoughts have their play, and its lethal potency is never lost but may await fruition at the appropriate cycle of time. Anger, envy, jealousy, passion, pride, hatred, etc., are all concretizations of selfish thoughts of one unit of humanity trying to segregate itself from the homogeneity of the whole, and for that reason must be accounted unclean.

Besides acts that are meant to harm another directly, there are those that all too often are sought to be excused on the ground that no harm is intended or inflicted on another. Acts not done in the company of others, like the taking of intoxicating drugs or drinks, or the committing of suicide; acts done with the full and unqualified consent of others, like indulging in free love, or acts of perversion, fall within this category. To understand the enormity of these, one has only to view them against the background of the divine purpose and of the evolutionary processes that seek to attain its fulfilment. Seen thus, each of these acts will be found to be one of self-abuse—an act

that degrades the Self and seeks to divert it from its wonted purpose. This purpose is the *fons et origo* of any duty, and when one runs away from one's obligations or seeks to satisfy the desires of the flesh or of the intellect at the expense of the desires of the Soul, one but tarnishes the instrument that the Soul has to use and makes it so full of blemishes as to render it unfit for use by the God within. Any desire that is lit at the fires of earthly hopes and passions, any inclination or attachment that is born in the inner deceptive world of psychic visions, sounds and sensations, sets up an exhalation or fume that envelops the mind and makes it impervious to impressions from on high.

There is an atmosphere, spiritual, psychic or mental, which surrounds human beings and even places where they are wont to forgather. The atmosphere of a travern, a church, a college-room, a law-court, is peculiarly its own and casts a spell on susceptible natures even though the place be empty. Where men form strong ideological groups, they create a vibrant atmosphere which reflects its health and vitality at any moment of time. It draws its sustenance from the appropriate congenial atmosphere existing anywhere in space. A group for thieving, or a so-called respectable group of tycoons bent on similar depredations in the territory of others, is vampirized by a consubstantial portion of the astral light on which it feeds and to which it contributes its quota of evil. On the other hand, if it is a genuinely Theosophical or spiritual group, it will exude and maintain an atmosphere of peace and tolerance and draw upon the influences which reside in *Akasha* and which can be tapped so long as a spirit of spiritual solidarity continues to pervade the group. But when internal bickerings arise and the lines of Brotherhood are weakened by backbiting and slander, or when backsliding in morals takes place, consubstantiality with any realm of *Akasha* is lost and no light can come. It were futile to decide that we will not join any group and thus at least prevent our shortcomings from affecting others. It would be foolish for anyone to say that the air he uses for breathing shall be his own special property which none else shall use. We are at no time alone. The man who tries to play the lone wolf will learn sooner or later that he cannot but affect and be affected by the Karma of other Souls.

Students have often felt a drag which the sensuous and selfish

emanations of the group impose upon the units, and finding the going slow and difficult have yielded themselves up to despair. They have to imbibe the bitter lesson that their efforts at individual attainment are as nought if they have not worked and toiled and sweated for the joint family to which they belong. The laxity and even failure of a member or members of such a family has to be assessed, admitted and countered by spiritual, unselfish and withal brotherly measures which are remedial. All efforts have to be made to give strength to the erring members to rehabilitate themselves. The priceless *sine qua non* of a pure and unified group atmosphere has to be preserved regardless of the sacrifice demanded. All moral codes, all rules of behaviour in any walk of life must subserve this purpose of creating and maintaining the required lucidity of the atmosphere built up by the group. It is the correct and only incentive to a nobler and more purposeful life. It is a direct and unequivocal step towards the true Guru and the real *Shastra*.

No ONE can know anything for another. Each one has to know for himself. Each one has to do his own learning. The object of Theosophy is to teach man what he is, to show man what he is, and to present to him the necessity of his knowing for himself. No vicarious atonement, no vicarious transmission of knowledge, is possible. But the direction in which knowledge lies may be pointed out; the steps which will lead us in that direction may be shown, as can be done only by those who have passed that way before. It is exactly what is being done. It is the course of all Saviours of humanity. It is the doctrine of Krishna, of Buddha, of Jesus, no less than the doctrine of H. P. Blavatsky. The two teachings that the West is most urgently in need of are those of Karma and Reincarnation, the doctrines of hope and responsibility—Karma, the doctrine of responsibility, means that whatever a man sows he shall also reap; Reincarnation, the doctrine of hope, means that—whatever he is reaping—there never will be a time when he may not sow better seed. The very fact of suffering is a blessing. Karma and Reincarnation show us that suffering is brought about by wrong thought and action; through our suffering we may be brought to a realization that a wrong course has been pursued. We learn through our suffering.

—ROBERT CROSBIE

APPLYING THEOSOPHY

THE question as to whether the teachings of Theosophy can be practically applied to everyday life is one that is frequently asked, not only by the casual inquirer into the philosophy, but also by students themselves. All too often Theosophy is regarded as a mere abstract system of thought, giving an intellectual explanation of life and its various processes and manifestations, but of little use in the practical affairs of life.

This is an erroneous view. It springs from a basic misconception which would be fatal for anyone to harbour who would make of Theosophy a living power in his life. For, if we would ever hope to achieve realization—direct, first-hand perception of the truth of the philosophy—we needs must exemplify it in daily life. To accept it intellectually but not to practise it is to deny it in the heart, and this constitutes a self-erected and insurmountable barrier on the path of true knowledge.

The word "practical," as its derivation suggests, signifies action. A practical man is a man who is inclined to action. A practical system is a system which can be put into effect. To make a practical application of anything we have to use that thing. Can Theosophy be used in the affairs of daily life? A Master of Wisdom once wrote:

> Theosophy should not represent merely a collection of moral verities, a bundle of metaphysical ethics, epitomized in theoretical dissertations. Theosophy *must be made practical*....
>
> The problem of true Theosophy and its great mission are, first, the working out of clear unequivocal conceptions of ethic ideas and duties, such as shall best and most fully satisfy the right and altruistic feelings in men; and second, the modelling of these conceptions for their adaptation into such forms of daily life, as shall offer a field where they may be applied with most equitableness. ("Some Words on Daily Life": *U.L.T. Pamphlet No. 22*)

These words of the Master make it amply clear that Theosophy *can* be applied. A true Theosophist is not one who calls himself a Theosophist, not even one who professes that he believes in the philosophy, but one who *does* Theosophy.

It may well be asked: "Why, then, does Theosophy lay so much stress on the study of philosophical, abstract and metaphysical

concepts?" In adopting his profession in life a young man readily and as a matter of course undertakes the course of study necessary to his future vocation. Yet it is strange that people who are desirous of leading a higher life often do not realize how necessary it is to gain right knowledge for such a serious venture. A little thought would convince us that, far from being impractical, those who study philosophy and metaphysics are the really practical people, for they have recognized the practical importance of such study for day-to-day living in the world. On the other hand, those who divorce knowledge and understanding from the performance of deeds or the application of that knowledge to life and life's problems, should be looked upon as impractical, for they have failed to see that such a divorce is not possible.

In this topsy-turvy age, we have been seeing things upside down, physically as well as metaphysically. The question whether Theosophy can be applied practically springs from such an upside-down picture. Reverse it and the question will be: Is there anything in the teachings of Theosophy that cannot be applied practically? The answer is: No, because Theosophy is essentially practical, inasmuch as none of its teachings are based on speculation or theory; they are all the result of actual experience or direct perception, and therefore they constitute the only true Knowledge there is.

Theosophy is in fact the root-base of every noteworthy ethical system the world has seen. It covers the whole ethical ground. There is hardly a problem on which Theosophy does not offer practical advice and instruction. He who would make Theosophy practical must let it enter into every detail of his life, in his dealings with others and his discipline of himself. These words of practical advice have been given to us by Robert Crosbie:

> How shall we apply Theosophy in daily life? First, to think what we are in reality, on arising; to endeavour to realize what this small segment of our great existence may mean in the long series of such existences; to resolve to live throughout the day from the highest of our realizations; to see in each event and circumstance a reproduction in small or in great of that which has been; and to deal with each and every one of these from that same high point. Resolve to deal with them as though each had a deep occult meaning and presented an opportunity to further the successes of the past, or undo the errors. Thus living from moment to moment,

> hour to hour, life will be seen as a portion of a great web of action and reaction, intermeshed at every point, and connected with the Soul which provided the energy that sustained it. If each event is so considered throughout the day, be it small or great, the power to guide and control your energies will in no long time be yours.

It depends in every case upon the man himself to what extent the teachings of Theosophy will be transformed for him from abstractions into realities. To the extent that anyone has *used* the teachings, to that extent he has experienced them, made them part of his own nature, assimilated them, and therefore to that extent he knows them to be practical. He who applies Theosophy will soon find out how practical it is, and for him the teachings change from the Eye Doctrine into the Heart Doctrine. This effort to realize Theosophy by the living of the life constitutes the first step on the path of the would-be disciple. "Even a little of this practice delivereth a man from great risk."

The whole of the *Gita* expounds the right philosophy of action; it is a book of practical guidance and instruction for every Arjuna or student-aspirant. The position in reference to action is summed up in this verse:

> ...perform thou that which thou hast to do, at all times unmindful of the event; for the man who doeth that which he hath to do, without attachment to the result, obtaineth the Supreme. (III, 19)

The injunction of Krishna, "Perform thou that which thou hast to do," is the injunction that Theosophy gives to its students. In the words of the same Master whom we have quoted earlier in the article:

> Let every Theosophist only do his duty, that which he can and ought to do, and very soon the sum of human misery [in the vicinity]...will be found visibly diminished. ("Some Words on Daily Life": *U.L.T. Pamphlet No.* 22, p. 10)

What could be more practical than this? In becoming practical Theosophists we take up our duty where we find it. Theosophy has been called the quintessence of duty. The very first subject H.P.B. deals with in the Section "What Is Practical Theosophy?" in *The Key to Theosophy*, is that of duty. We must perform our duty by every duty, because we owe it to that great Self which we are learning to realize, the Self of all of us; and therefore we owe it to the manifested rays of that one self—we owe it to humanity. This debt to humanity,

if left unpaid, will leave us morally and spiritually insolvent. To do our duty, therefore, is to pay our debts; it is to walk the path of practical Theosophy.

We can all become practical Theosophists and we should do so. What is badly needed in the world is practical Theosophy. "Theosophy teaches the animal-man to be a human-man"; it teaches people "to think and feel as truly human beings should feel and think." This alone will lead to consistently right action; this alone will change radically for the better the world in which we live and make it a more habitable world, peopled with thinkers who think along right lines and choosers who are aware of their moral responsibility. Then the task of moral and spiritual planning, in co-operation with Nature and Nature's changeless laws, in co-operation with universal ideals, will be much easier.

W.Q.J. once wrote:

> The path of Practical Theosophy is wide; it is narrow; it is straight; it is crooked; but it is never without good. Expect nothing; work without thought or desire for reward; share your happiness with others; be upright in your dealings with your fellow labourer on life's highway; work for the good of humanity; speak ill of no one; judge the act and not the actor; and last, but not least, strive for consistency as a Theosophist. Then will be realized the basic idea of Practical Theosophy and Universal Brotherhood.

> He who is single-minded, fixed on the word divine, his steadfast fulfilment of duty will make the knowing Soul (Atman) within him pure; to him whose knowing Soul is pure, a knowledge of the Self Supreme shall come; and, through this knowledge of the Self Supreme, he shall destroy this circle of birth and death, and its root together.
>
> —Shankaracharya: *The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom*

SPIRIT AND MATTER

THE relation between Spirit and Matter is one in which the layman as well as the philosopher should feel interest. Theosophy does not consider "Spirit" and "Matter" as independent realities. But they are more than intimately related components of a complex that includes both. Their fundamental *identity* was a basic concept of Indian philosophy from time immemorial, as is well brought out by H. P. Blavatsky's modern restatement of the ancient Teachings, which resolves convincingly the apparent duality.

> Spirit and Matter are the two States of the ONE, which is neither Spirit nor Matter, both being the absolute life, latent....Spirit is the first differentiation of (and in) SPACE; and Matter the first differentiation of Spirit. (*S.D.*, I, 258)

To "Spirit," she writes, is to be referred "every manifestation of consciousness, reflective or direct" (and also of the "unconscious purposiveness" of Western philosophy), as evidenced in "the Vital Principle and Nature's submission to the majestic sequence of immutable law." "Matter," simply put, is "the aggregate of objects of possible perception," physical or supersensual, for there may be forms of matter more tenuous than those which the instruments of science can discover, wedded to other forms of energy than those which modern science knows.

Spirit and Matter, however, are not independent realities but "the two primeval aspects of the One and Secondless," the two poles of the same homogeneous substance, the root-principle of the universe, one pole of that infinite Ocean of Light being "pure *Spirit* lost in the absoluteness of Non-Being, and the other, the *matter* in which it condenses, crystallizing into a more and more gross type as it descends into manifestation." "Matter is Spirit, and *vice versa*."

The caduceus of Mercury figures suggestively the relation between Spirit and Matter. Its rod conveys the same idea as the trunk of the Hindu Asvattha (the tree of Life and Being), which at every new period of manifestation grows from "the two dark wings of the Swan of Life."

> The two Serpents, the ever-living and its illusion (Spirit and matter) whose two heads grow from the one head between the

> wings, descend along the trunk, interlaced in close embrace. The two tails join on earth (the manifested Universe) into one, and this is the great illusion. (*S.D.*, I, 549)

Edison expressed a fundamental concept of the Eastern teaching when he declared: "I do not believe that matter is inert, acted upon by an outside force. To me it seems that every atom is possessed by a certain amount of primitive intelligence.

There is no Matter without Spirit, no Spirit without Matter, in the manifested world. As Madame Blavatsky puts the ancient teaching, "It is only through some molecular aggregation or fabric that Spirit wells up in a stream of individual or subconscious subjectivity." In cosmos, in the evolutionary process, the operations of Spirit and Matter, like the centripetal and centrifugal forces, produce harmony and preserve equilibrium.

> The whole of antiquity was imbued with that philosophy which teaches the involution of spirit into matter, the progressive, downward cyclic descent, or active, self-conscious evolution. (*S.D.*, I, 416)

The evolutionary cycle, in other words, represents "a descent of Spirit into Matter, equivalent to an ascent in physical evolution; a reascent from the depths of materiality towards its *status quo ante*, with a corresponding dissipation of concrete form and substance up to...what Science calls 'the zero-point,' and beyond."

Spirit and Matter are equilibrized in Man, who is their creature and a manifestation of them in his periodical appearances in a physical body—their son, in one sense, as is the manifested Universe itself. The Mind of man, the emanation of the very essence of pure divine Intelligence, is at this stage of the evolutionary cycle the link between Matter and Spirit in him, as cosmic energy is the link between Matter and Spirit in Nature. Man, as the manifested Deity in both its aspects, spiritual and material, good and evil, "is himself the separator of the ONE into various contrasted aspects," the apparent contrast arising only partly from the various degrees of differentiation of the latter and partly from the grades of consciousness attained by man himself.

From the standpoint of the human thinker, therefore, Matter may be described as "the sequence of our own states of consciousness," and Spirit as "an idea of psychic intuition."

THE NET OF ATTACHMENT

IN Verse 89 of the *Dhammapada*, the Buddha speaks of Nirvana as "freedom of detachment." This a phrase striking enough in itself, but how wonderfully descriptive of the one who is truly free!

Freedom *of* detachment is freedom *from* attachment. If, as we are taught, the soul is caught, is fast bound by the hundred cords of desire—whether good or bad—how wonderfully free it would feel if it were detached from those cords! Attachment means clinging to something; detachment is the freeing of ourselves from that to which we have been attached. Only the detached are free.

"The onlooker sees most of the game," we say. We can help a friend who is in trouble when we are not in a similar spot ourselves. He and his trouble are one; he is fast attached to his trouble. We who are not involved can take a detached view of it and so feel free. Therefore we can go to the help of the friend and see the right course of action more clearly than he can. But unless we have detached ourselves at some prior time from that kind of trouble, either by practical experience or by reasoned analysis, we will not be able to help in a real way.

We can be attached and bound on many planes, whether it be attachment to family, to country, or to oneself; whether it be to likes and dislikes or to mental ideas, or even to the manifold forms we see around us.

What a sense of freedom sometimes comes to the old when the pleasures of life no longer hold them in thraldom! What a sense of freedom comes to the one who has freed himself from dogmas that had formerly held him in bondage! There is no feeling so instinct with power as freedom from erstwhile bonds. The freedom of the free lance, in contrast with the demands upon one who works for a particular journal, is very real, even if the former is attached in other ways. The story of the only happy man being one who did not possess even a shirt gives a graphic picture of detachment.

To realize that, at our stage, the best service we can render to humanity is to conquer ourselves—with the right motive, of course—seems like isolating ourselves, but we are not to become attached even to isolation. Complete freedom of detachment means detachment from the "dire heresy of separateness," but not "ceasing to be." We

must realize that sinking into the ALL is not detachment; it is attachment—attachment to Bliss. We are caught in the net of attachment even more firmly than when living in the world of attachments. Only in the course of evolution will we be free.

Though it would seem that to work for humanity and to refuse Bliss Ineffable would be attachment to humanity, it is not so. A Renouncer-Sacrificer is not attached to our world in the sense in which we understand attachment, but, having risen above the plane on which we find ourselves, he can at will attach himself and detach himself. He is not bound; he is free. He can work in the world and with humanity, but he is free in that work.

"Help Nature and work on with her," we are told; and by so doing we gain mastery over her. No longer does the Law bind us; we are its masters by virtue of the fact that we work with it and are not attached to whatever it may bring us.

The Buddha said that, while he was attached to humanity and its woes, he had wept with it; but, after having attained enlightenment, he laughed, for he had gained freedom and could teach others how to gain that freedom for themselves. We must all attain freedom in the course of evolution, for that course is our own. When our will becomes the ONE WILL we shall no longer be attached. Detaching ourselves from the personal will, we are free.

WHO are the learned? They who practise what they know.

The Lord doth not regard a prayer in which the heart doth not accompany the body.

The most excellent *Jihad* [Holy War] is that for the conquest of self.

Muhammad once referred to strife, and said, "It will appear at the time of knowledge leaving the world." Ziad said, "O Messenger of God, how will knowledge go from the world, since we read the *Koran*, and teach it to our children, and our children to theirs; and so on till the last day?" Then Muhammad said, "O Ziad, I supposed you the most learned man of Medinah. Do the Jews and Christians who read the Bible and the Evangel act on them?"

The love of the world is the root of all evil.

—SAYINGS OF MUHAMMAD

COURAGE IN ADVERSITY

> Beware of fear that spreadeth, like the black and soundless wings of midnight bat, between the moonlight of thy Soul and thy great goal that loometh in the distance far away.
>
> Fear, O Disciple, kills the will and stays all action.
>
> —*The Voice of the Silence*

IN her vast storehouse, a great Master writes, "Nature has an antidote for every poison, and her laws a reward for every suffering." Life, the Great Physician, ever acts to mend broken harmony, to adjust disturbances and restore balance. This is Unwritten Law. Therefore, carrying the idea further, must there not be a natural, dependable and lasting cure for every mental sickness, even fear? The logic of this position is to be found in the Oneness of Life; man and nature are an indivisible partnership, a Living Unit. Whatever man thinks, feels, or does is instantly recorded in all departments of nature, and adjustments are set in motion to restore equilibrium.

This is a beleaguered humanity, in spite of its superabundance of psychological cures, religious poultices and a constant stream of distracting, expensive toys. Man fears failure, death, destruction, disease, unemployment, loss of loved ones. Notwithstanding the many up-to-the-minute prescriptions offered him, he is not relieved, for these quick cures go not deep enough to the roots of fear. People want to be told something more than "Have faith, there's nothing to fear." Many experiences do befall which are naturally to be shunned, and the specious kind of mental healing contained in the words, "Everything will be all right," is unconvincing and short-lived. Besides, this kind of reassurance throws the responsibility upon someone else, and people continue to be afraid.

The roots of fear lie in blind acceptance of the partial and degrading dogmas of church and science which deliberately ignore the divinity and power within *all* men. They lie also in the worship of the fleeting forms which Life assumes, instead of worship of the eternal Spirit within. They lie in the belittling mores of a society which disbelieves in all but material things. The roots of fear lie in lack of human solidarity.

Thus an acute need for right ideas is present today, and if there is one contribution which the student of Theosophy should make, it is

to endeavour to dispel some of the apprehension which haunts his fellow-men. This duty, absolutely essential in the pursuit of the Theosophical way of life, is of the nature of mental service, the offering of eternal verities to others when consequences appear to close in and fear assails. Will it not help man if he knows how fear is created? Is it the ever-present Unknown that makes him fearful? (Hardly one of us ever gives a fleeting thought to what will happen during our sleep, which is also unknown). Or is it possibly man's ignorance of what he *really* is which makes him fearful?

The great souls in history (the list is longer than we think) all possessed an extraordinary amount of calm and resoluteness that carried them victorious through terrifying experiences, poignant heartaches, dismal failures, to meet their appointed hour with destiny. How Robert Crosbie, the Founder of the United Lodge of Theosophists, passed through those experiences is revealed in his assuring words to a friend: "So we should strive for calmness, patience, and fortitude, and also have full confidence that the tide is bound to turn, even at the fifty-ninth minute of the eleventh hour." Had not these great souls tapped the Source of courage and found it responsive and bountiful? Undoubtedly they had rediscovered in themselves the Higher Self of all creatures, a working knowledge of which dissolves all fear.

It is not enough to declare, "Knowledge is the antidote to fear," and then let the person either become baffled or take the usual line of thinking towards what he feels to be knowledge. The student who would help must follow through with ideas of a *soul-satisfying* nature. The farmer, when he sets about pruning his orchard, does so with an end in view, a more abundant crop. He does not cut indiscriminately, but carefully selects and trims those branches which are reducing the yield. So it is with fear. Cut back the growth of wrong ideas with the good of the soul in view. One should not think so much of the spreading of right ideas as he should understand that *they alone* relieve the kamic tension and set in motion the gentle currents of peace and equilibrium.

The conquest of fear lies in the growing inner realization of the doctrines of Reincarnation and Karma. The dual nature of man is a compelling right idea with which to stimulate this perception because it simply and naturally takes the mind off that which is always dwelt upon by the fearful person—the lower physical personality. Interest in

the immortal higher nature opens the way to the unbroken continuity of existence, the only recognizable, logical, hopeful and universally satisfying answer to the mystery of survival. Awareness of Karma, the constant sowing of causes and reaping of effects, furthers the feeling of security. Hence the antidote for fear is the renewing of the mind by shifting it from daily experiences to That which is experiencing, from the personal to the Impersonal, from the physical man, born in time, to the Ego of life everlasting.

But one unsuspected antidote for fear remains which may be likened to a shield for the future because of its unfailing protection for all those who use it. Mr. Judge indicates how it is found: "No earnest one who feels called to work persistently for the good of humanity, and not for his own, need fear aught that heaven or hell holds."

CONSIDER a parable of the sun. If a herb hath not sap, the sun's rays scorch it; but if it hath sap, the sun's rays warm it, whereby it grows. So also in the life of essence in man. Hath that life not ens from God's gentleness and love, *viz.*, from the eternal One, then it impresseth itself into a fierce, fiery sharpness, so that the mind becomes wholly rough, hungry, covetous, envious and stinging. And such false sense and will proceeds then from the life into the body, and into all its ways and works.

Such a fiery, covetous, envious nature with the life's sharp sense scatters and destroys all that is good. There is danger in all it has to do with. For it carries its poisonous rays thereinto, and will draw all to itself, and bring its poison thereinto, *viz.*, hungry covetousness. But if it be that the fiery life can eat of divine love, then it is a similitude how a light presses forth from fire: Thus the right life presses forth from the fiery nature with a new spirit and will of divine love from within; and is no longer taking, as the fire's nature is, but giving. For the will of love gives itself, as light from fire, which gives itself to all things, and produces in all something that is good.

—JACOB BOEHME

LIGHT ON THE PATH

[P. Sreenevas Row's annotations on the closing Section of *Light on the Path*, entitled "Karma," are concluded here. They appeared originally in *The Theosophist* for March 1886.]

SECTION III, CLAUSE 4

But eventually the long strands, the living threads, which in their unbroken continuity form the individual, pass out of the shadow into the shine. Then the threads are no longer colourless, but golden; once more they lie together, level. Once more harmony is established between them; and from that harmony within, the greater harmony is perceived.

AS we have seen, it is the conjunction of the soul with the body that gives rise to good or evil Karma, and to consequent multiplicity of deaths and rebirths into the physical body. To the soul thus embodied, there is no peace. But there is this most encouraging fact that this double feature in man is not constant; it began with the union of the soul with the body, and it must end with its disunion. All earthly relations are foreign to the soul, and cannot adhere to it for ever. When the process of regeneration is sufficiently advanced to enable the spiritual entity to dispense with further association with the body, the soul becomes exempted from the necessity of a relapse into materiality. It should therefore be the assiduous endeavour of man to transcend all the qualities which are co-existent with the body, break the bonds of the heart, and then shake off the mortal coil altogether. Then the soul feels as lightsome as "the horse which shakes off the dust from its hairy skin," and shines like "the eclipsed moon, which escapes from the mouth (shadow) of Rahu" (*Chandogya Upanishad*, VIII, 13). And thenceforth, the individual is no longer subject to death or birth; and the hitherto embodied individual—the mortal—becomes immortal. (*Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad*, IV, iv, 7; *Katha Upanishad*, VI, 14; *Bhagavad-Gita*, IV, 9, and *Vishnu Purana*)

At this stage the threads of Karma lose their stain and binding force, and will assume the golden colour—for then the soul is fit to attain Brahma. But it must be remembered that this change of colour, and the attainment of the final, predominant colour of gold, is not effected in one birth. The colour improves gradually with the growth of merit during each birth; and assumes the purest and brightest hue

when the soul reaches the highest state of spiritual excellence; and this process will take ages for its completion. "Even the wise man," says Sri Krishna, proceedeth not unto me until after many births. The Yogi, who labouring with all his might, is purified of his sins; and, after many births, made perfect, goeth at length to the Supreme abode" (*Bhagavad-Gita*, VI, 45 and VII, 19). But it is certain that everyone who deserves Divine bliss will attain to it, however long the process may take. "I am the same to all mankind," says Sri Krishna. "They who serve me with faith are in me and I am in them. However evil one's ways might have been hitherto, if he only serves me, he becomes as good as a just man; he soon becometh of a virtuous spirit, and he eventually obtaineth eternal bliss" (*Bhagavad-Gita*, IX, 29-31). The philosophy of this theory is explained by the Great Author of the "Fragments of Occult Truth," in the Appendix, in these words:

> The individuality or the spiritual monad is a thread upon which are strung various personalities. Each personality leaves its own—the higher spiritual—impressions upon the divine *Ego*, the consciousness of which returns at a certain stage of its progress, even that of the highly depraved soul that had to perish in the end. The reason for it becomes self-evident, if one reflects that, however criminal and lost to every glimmer of a higher feeling, no human soul is yet born utterly depraved, and that there was a time during the youth of the sinful human personality when it had worked out some kind or other of *Karma*; and that it is this that survives and forms the basis of the *Karma* to come. To make it clearer, let us suppose that A lives to that age when a person becomes an adult and begins to bloom fully into life. No man, however vicious his natural tendency, becomes so at once. He has had therefore time to evolve a *Karma*, however faint and insignificant. Let us further imagine that at the age of eighteen or twenty, A begins to give way to vice, and thus gradually loses the remotest connection with his higher principle. At thirty, or say forty, he dies. Now, the personality of A between fifteen and twenty is as little the personality of A from twenty to thirty, as though it were quite another man. Even the physiologists divide the physical personality into stages of seven, and show man changing atoms to the last, every seven years. The same with the inner man. The fifth principle of the sensual, highly depraved man, may and will perish, while the *Karma* of his youth, though not strong and complete enough to secure for him a bliss in *Devachan* (Heaven) and union with his higher principle—is yet

sufficiently outlived to allow the monad a grasp on it for the next rebirth. On the other hand, we are taught that it so happens sometimes that the *Karma* of a personality is not fully worked out in the birth that follows. Life is made up of accidents, and the personality that becomes may be hindered by circumstances from receiving the full due its *Karma* is entitled to, whether for good or for bad. But the Law of Retribution will never allow itself to be cheated by blind chance. There is then a provision to be made, and the accounts that could not be settled in one birth will be squared in the succeeding one. The portion of the sum-total, which could not be summed up in one column is carried forward to the following. For verily the many lives of an individual monad were well compared in the "Fragments" to the pages of an account book—THE BOOK OF LIFE—or Lives.

The book referred to may, I beg leave to add, be the book of record kept by the great Universal Historiographer, Chitragupta, already spoken of.

Here the philosophy of Karma is brought to a close in our Text; and the following summary of Karma and its consequences, given in Chapter VII of *Anugita*, a well-known episode in the *Mahabharata*, may be studied to advantage:

There is no destruction here of actions, good or not good. Coming to one body after another, they become ripened in their respective ways. As a fruitful tree producing fruit may yield much fruit, so does merit performed with a pure mind become expanded. Sin, too, performed with a sinful mind, is similarly expanded. For the self engages in action, putting forward this mind. And now, further, hear how a man, overwhelmed with action, and enveloped in desire and anger, enters a womb. Within the womb of a woman, he obtains, as the result of action, a body good or bad, made up of virile semen and blood....That soul, after entering all the limbs of the foetus, part by part, and dwelling in the seat of the life-wind, supports them with the mind. Then the foetus, becoming possessed of consciousness, moves about its limbs. As liquefied iron being poured out assumes the form of the image, such you must know is the entrance of the soul into the foetus. As fire entering a ball of iron, heats it, such too you must understand, is the manifestation of the soul in the foetus. And as a blazing lamp shines in a house, even so does consciousness light up the bodies. And whatever action he performs, whether good or bad, everything done in a former body

> must necessarily be enjoyed or suffered. Then, that is exhausted, and again other is accumulated, so long as the piety which dwells in the practice of concentration of mind for final emancipation has not been learnt.

But, when once this is learnt, one can make sure of attaining the Supreme; for, in the words of Sri Krishna, "No true devotee shall ever perish." (*Bhagavad-Gita*, IX, 31)

Now the Text proceeds to give certain explanations and advice incidental to the foregoing rules and observations.

Section III, Clause 5

> This illustration presents but a small portion—a single side of the truth: it is less than a fragment. Yet, dwell on it; by its aid you may be led to perceive more. What it is necessary first to understand is, not that the future is arbitrarily formed by any separate acts of the present, but that the whole of the future is in unbroken continuity with the present as the present is with the past. On one plane, from one point of view, the illustration of the rope is correct.

It is said that the illustration of Karma by means of the ordinary rope, represents only a single side of truth, because, although the rope is made up of innumerable filaments twisted together and rendered sufficiently strong to drag even the heaviest body, yet its filaments are inactive and lifeless; whereas those which compose Karma are living, electrical filaments, capable of forming and ruling the destinies of men and nations. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the formation and operation of Karma can hardly be illustrated by anything else than a rope. The Sanscrit word for an ordinary rope and for the quality of *Prakriti* (nature) is one and the same, namely, *Guna*, because the qualities of *Prakriti* operate as ropes to bind a man to the world; and as Karma arises by the operation of these qualities, and binds such men from birth to birth, it is figuratively called *Karma-pasa* (rope of Karma).

Section III, Clause 6

> It is said that a little attention to occultism produces great Karmic results. That is because it is impossible to give any attention to occultism without making a definite choice between what are familiarly called good and evil. The first step in occultism brings the student to the tree of knowledge. He must pluck and eat;

he must choose. No longer is he capable of the indecision of ignorance. He goes on either on the good or on the evil path. And to step definitely and knowingly even but one step on either path produces great Karmic results. The mass of men walk waveringly, uncertain as to the goal they aim at; their standard of life is indefinite; consequently their Karma operates in a confused manner. But, when once the threshold of knowledge is reached, the confusion begins to lessen, and consequently the Karmic results increase enormously, because all are acting in the same direction on all the different planes : for the occultist cannot be half-hearted, nor can he return when he has passed the threshold. These things are as impossible as that the man should become the child again. The individuality has approached the state of responsibility by reason of growth; it cannot recede from it.

Where a child fears not the consequences of his meddling with a sharp knife in a rash and careless manner, an adult is extremely cautious about it, and uses the best possible care in handling it. Where an ordinary person sees nothing but a pleasant white powder in arsenic and is ready to use it for any purpose whatsoever, the medical man sees in it the deadly poison, and takes the utmost care in dealing with it. In the same way, where an ordinary man looks upon a particular thing or event as being the most trifling and indifferent, the occultist views it with the utmost gravity, and watches its progress with the profoundest interest. For he sees, hears and understands things which are beyond the perception of an ordinary man; and therefore becomes impressed with a graver sense of responsibility than all other persons. Hence it is said that even a little attention to occultism produces a great *Karmic* result. Indeed it behoves an occultist to behave more prudently than ordinary people, in the same way as the latter are under obligation to behave themselves more cautiously than children, or lunatics.

Section III, Clause 7

He who would escape from the bondage of Karma must raise his individuality out of the shadow into the shine; must so elevate his existence that these threads do not come in contact with soiling substances, do not become so attached as to be pulled awry. He simply lifts himself out of the region in which Karma operates. He does not leave the existence which he is experiencing because of that. The ground may be rough and dirty, or full of rich flowers

whose pollen stains and of sweet substances that cling and become attachments—but overhead there is always the free sky. He who desires to be Karmaless must look to the air for a home; and after that to the ether. He who desires to form good Karma will meet with many confusions, and in the effort to sow rich seed for his own harvesting may plant a thousand weeds, and among them the giant. Desire to sow no seed for your own harvesting; desire only to sow that seed the fruit of which shall feed the world. You are a part of the world; in giving it food you feed yourself. Yet in even this thought there lurks a great danger which starts forward and faces the disciple, who has for long thought himself working for good, while in his utmost soul he has perceived only evil; that is, he has thought himself to be intending great benefit to the world, while all the time he has unconsciously embraced the thought of Karma, and the great benefit he works for is for himself. A man may refuse to allow himself to think of reward. But in that very refusal is seen the fact that reward is desired. And it is useless for the disciple to strive to learn by means of checking himself. The soul must be unfettered, the desires free. But until they are fixed only on that state wherein there is neither reward nor punishment, good nor evil, it is in vain that he endeavours. He may seem to make great progress, but some day he will come face to face with his own soul, and will recognize that when he came to the tree of knowledge he chose the bitter fruit and not the sweet; and then the veil will fall utterly, and he will give up his freedom and become a slave of desire.

Therefore be warned, you who are but turning towards the life of occultism. Learn now that there is no cure for desire, no cure for the love of reward, no cure for the misery of longing, save in the fixing of the sight and hearing upon that which is invisible and soundless. Begin even now to practise it, and so a thousand serpents will be kept from your path. Live in the eternal.

These observations are calculated to warn the pilgrim of the dangers which are likely to beset him on his path, and to instruct him how to behave himself in every respect. They are plain enough in themselves, and the reader who has mastered the preceding rules, will find it easy enough to understand them.

Section III, Clause 8

The operations of the actual laws of Karma are not to be studied

> until the disciple has reached the point at which they no longer affect himself. The initiate has a right to demand the secrets of nature and to know the rules which govern human life. He obtains this right by having escaped from the limits of nature and by having freed himself from the rules which govern human life. He has become a recognized portion of the divine element, and is no longer affected by that which is temporary. He then obtains the knowledge of the laws which govern temporary conditions. Therefore you who desire to understand the laws of Karma, attempt first to free yourself from these laws; and this can only be done by fixing your attention on that which is unaffected by those laws.

The laws of Karma have reference solely to actions partaking of the qualities of nature (*Prakriti*), whose secrets none but an Initiate has the right to demand and learn; for he alone can be said to have freed himself from the bonds of nature, and therefore to be able to unravel its mysteries. The text consequently advises those who desire to understand the laws of Karma to prepare themselves for the task by first getting rid of worldly concerns, and fixing their undivided attention upon that which is unaffected by the laws and bonds of Karma, namely, the Eternal *Sat*. For, "as here on earth, whatever has been acquired by exertion perishes, so perishes all that is acquired for the next world by sacrifices and other good actions performed on earth; for there is no freedom in any world for those that depart from hence without having discovered the self." (*Chandogya Upanishad*, VIII, i, 6)

But it is not meant by this that those who desire to attain the Supreme should necessarily desert their homestead and all its belongings, and lead a forest life. What is required is that one should perform his allotted function, quite unmindful of its consequences; practise virtue and piety for their own sake, without a grain of selfish motive and without the least expectation of reward; and direct his inmost thoughts to the contemplation and attainment of the Supreme. This is all and nothing more is needed, for, in the words of the author of the *Mahabharata*, "What need has a self-controlled man of the forest; and of what use is the forest to an uncontrolled man? Wherever a self-controlled dwells, that is a forest; that is a hermitage" (*Santi Parva*). And, "No evil stain clings to him who knows *Sat*, the Eternal Truth, although he may be living in the world, even as the water does not cling to a lotus-leaf, although it is constantly in the water"

(*Chandogya Upanishad*, IV, xiv, 3)

Epilogue

My readers, I have now arrived at the end of the Treatise, *Light on the Path*, but certainly not at the end of the subject of which it treats—a task which for me is simply impracticable, and which I never presumed to accomplish. The subject is as profoundly mysterious as it is sublimely sacred. It is a science transcending every other science; the only science which serves man beyond this flitting Present; yea, the science of the soul, the eternal, absolute soul.

While, in conclusion, giving expression to my humble sense of gratitude to the author of this little gem of a book, for cordially according to me the privilege of annotating the same in my own way, I venture to invite the attention of my readers to another book from the pen of the same writer, which is most appropriately called *The Idyll of the White Lotus*, and which, in my humble opinion, has such a very intimate connection with the present Treatise that the study of the one cannot be complete without that of the other.

For,

Firstly, that book (the *Idyll*) which was written in 1884, embodies what in the preface is emphatically called "The Tragedy of the Soul"; while this book, penned in 1885, contains rules necessary for enacting that Tragedy.

Secondly, that book (*Idyll*, in Book II, Ch. VIII) defines the *three* Truths, which are absolute and which cannot be lost, while this book (in Sections 1, 2 and 3, respectively) prescribes the infallible method by which those three eternal Truths can be realized—as the reader will clearly see from the following explanations. The first Truth declared in the *Idyll* is that "the soul of man is immortal; and its future is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour has no limit"; and the first section in the present Treatise has likewise reference to the individual soul; it teaches that the soul is a reality and immortal, while the body perishes and is mortal; and it gives the rules as to what is to be desired and what is to be avoided by one who is desirous of finding and recognizing his soul. Then the second Truth inculcated in the *Idyll* is that "the principle which gives life dwells in us, and without us, is undying and eternally beneficent, is not heard or seen or smelt, but is perceived by the man who desires perception"; while

the second section of the present Treatise lays down the means of perceiving this Supreme Soul as the highest and ultimate end of man. And then the third Truth enunciated in the *Idyll* is that "each man is his own absolute lawgiver, the dispenser of glory or gloom to himself; the decreer of his life, his reward, his punishment"; while the third section of the present Treatise, entitled "Karma," conveys the very same idea, and explains how Karma is generated and how it is annihilated as the best means of establishing a link between the object of the first Truth and that of the second Truth, which, in other words, means the attainment of *Moksha*, the final beatitude.

And, thirdly, that book (*Idyll*) is the book of the *Path*; and this book is the book of *Light* on the Path. The path is the path of Devas (Gods); the path that leads to Brahma; the path whence no devoted pilgrim returns to the condition of the misery of death and birth (*Chandogya Upanishad*, IV, xv, 6). And the Light is that which discloses what was hitherto hidden from our view owing to our ignorance; the highest light; the light of lights, which shines above the heaven; higher than everything in the highest worlds, beyond which there is nothing else. (*Ibid.*, III, xiii, 5)

Travelling on the Path, thus illumined, the devoted pilgrim beholds the Individual soul, and through it, the Supreme; and then the bonds of his heart are broken; all his doubts vanish; and the whole effect of his Karma is annihilated. (*Mundaka Upanishad*, II, viii)

> May both the Teacher and the disciple be glorious (*Tejaswi*); may our study be glorious; and may we not encounter any obstacles! Om! (*Taittiriya Upanishad*)

Peace ! Peace ! Peace !

> THE greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.
>
> —WILLIAM JAMES

IN THE LIGHT OF THEOSOPHY

The number and variety of living organisms on the earth is still not even approximately known. Despite more than 250 years of systematic research, estimates of the total number of plant, animal and other species vary widely, from three million to 30 million or more. Modern tallies of animal species most useful or attractive to humans—birds and mammals—are nearly complete, but the total diversity of organisms such as insects, spiders, fungi, nematodes and bacteria remains poorly known. Likewise among plants, compared to the known varieties there is an infinite number of unknown species.

As Robert M. May, Royal Society Research Professor at the University of Oxford, and at Imperial College, London, since 1989, observes in the October 1992 *Scientific American*, the current state of affairs is particularly distressing in light of the rapid rate at which wild habitats are being destroyed. A knowledge of the total number and distribution of species, he says, is fundamental for developing a rational programme to conserve as much as possible of the remaining biological diversity.

> The British government [May writes] expressed the argument with admirable clarity in a 1990 white paper: "The starting point for this Government is the ethical imperative of stewardship which must underlie all environmental policies....We have a moral duty to look after our planet and to hand it on in good order to future generations."
>
> Political leaders face a baffling assortment of environmental concerns that cry out for a better understanding of how ecosystems change as constituent species die out and are succeeded by other forms of life. Such an inquiry explores the fundamental relation between diversity and the stability of a biological community. It also touches on other compelling issues, such as predicting changes in the earth's climate. After all, the earth's oxygen-rich atmosphere was originally produced by living organisms, a fact that underlines the extent to which ecosystems and the atmosphere are intertwined.
>
> More immediately, utilitarian reasons for counting and cataloguing species are also noteworthy. A considerable fraction of modern medicines has been developed from biological compounds found in plants. Society would be well advised to keep looking at other shelves in the larder rather than destroying them. Many nutritious fruits and root crops remain largely unexploited; cultivating

them could expand and improve the global food supply....

The ultimate aim in recording biological diversity is to build a factual foundation for answering basic questions about evolution and ecology....Species counts are useful because the species is a fairly concrete and readily defined measure of genetic uniqueness. But many evolutionary questions or practical purposes direct interest toward diversity at higher or lower taxonomic levels....

Improving the catalogue of life will require a huge co-ordinated and sustained effort. I believe such dedication is warranted....Future generations will, I believe, be saddened—as people should be today—that our society has devoted so little money and effort toward quantifying and conserving the forms of life that define the earth's unique glory.

In the economy of nature, everything is in its right place, and every species has its purpose. But whence the infinite diversity of species in nature?

Every form, we are told, is built in accordance with the model traced for it in the Eternity and reflected in the DIVINE MIND. There are hierarchies of "Builders of form," and series of forms and degrees, from the highest to the lowest. While the former are shaped under the guidance of the "Builders," the gods, "Cosmocratores," the latter are fashioned by the Elementals or Nature Spirits. (*Transactions*, p. 129)

It is the "many" that proceed from the ONE—the living spiritual germs *or centres of forces*—each in a septenary form, which first generate, and then give the PRIMARY IMPULSE to the law of evolution and gradual slow development....There are centres of creative power for every ROOT or parent species of the host of forms of vegetable and animal life. This is, again, no "special creation," nor is there any "Design," except in the general "ground-plan" worked out by the universal law. But there are certainly "designers," though these are neither omnipotent nor omniscient in the absolute sense of the term. They are simply *Builders*, or Masons, working under the impulse given them by the ever-to-be-unknown (on our plane) Master Mason—the ONE LIFE and Law....In the *creation* of new species, departing sometimes very widely from the Parent stock...it is the "designers" who direct the new evolution by adding to, or depriving the species of certain appendages, either needed or becoming useless in the new environments. (*S.D.*, II, 732)

How do children learn and acquire competence? Why do some succeed and others fail? Dr. Joan Freeman's book, *Quality Basic Education: The Development of Competence*, a major publication of UNESCO's International Bureau of Education, examines the findings of recent research on the development of children's abilities, and offers practical suggestions and clear ideas for the use of parents and teachers, as well as educational planners and decision-makers.

Dr. Freeman, who is the President of the European Council for High Ability, gives special consideration to the education of highly able children, especially those who may not be recognized as such because of their circumstances. "Study of the highly able is beneficial to all individuals, because it highlights their special ways of functioning which can be learned by other children," she writes, maintaining that "all children have abilities and the capacity to learn." "We have in the past seriously underestimated the human potential," she says, citing the decoding and learning of language as "a brilliant feat that is accomplished by everyone, including slow learners....Whatever abilities children are born with, if they can be helped to use them in the most effective way, both their level of performance in life and their personal happiness are likely to be greatly improved."

Though progress has been made in analysing the differences in learning abilities in children from birth onwards, modern thought has not yet put forward any satisfactory explanation as to *why* this should be so. It is true that there is a talent lurking in almost every child, and given the right conditions, it can be nurtured into full flower. Parents and educators, though they play an important role, but help to fructify the traits of the incoming Ego. There *are* "exceptional" children, and it is equally true that there are "laggards," and no amount of "opportunities" will bring them up to the level of the truly talented. The explanation of course lies in the doctrine of reincarnation. A child often brings back with him some memory of something learned in a previous life; and that is why certain skills are more easily developed by some children than by others.

H.P.B. advocated reducing "the purely mechanical work of the memory to an absolute minimum" and devoting time instead to "the development and training of the inner senses, faculties and latent capacities."

> We would endeavour to deal with each child as a unit, and to

> educate it so as to produce the most harmonious and equal unfoldment of its powers, in order that its special aptitudes should find their full natural development. (*The Key to Theosophy*, p. 268)

In our age, too much is made of intellectual development. The children of the present generation are believed to be superior *intellectually* to those of the past generations, but are they not lagging behind *morally*? The fault lies more in the parents and the teachers, who are for the most part ignorant of the true meaning of life and its purpose, and who do not realize in the least what the "children" in their care really are. For, the child bodies are merely the housings of *Egos*, coming into incarnation again to take up physical life with the ideas and on the basis gained in previous lives on earth.

Why do some people in distress get no help from the public, while others are given immediate aid? In *New Statesman and Society* (London) for November 13, 1992, Maryon Tysoe looks into what makes a Good Samaritan.

Incidents of bystanders watching a crime being perpetrated, hearing the victim's screams of anguish and cries for help, yet doing nothing even though they are in a position to help, are not infrequent. "Is it because urban society makes people apathetic, indifferent and alienated?" Tysoe asks. When people hear or read about such incidents it horrifies them, and there have been enough psychological studies to assess why such things happen. In the light of this research, the belief that the incidents signal appalling depths of apathy and callousness is no longer the most compelling interpretation. Nor does it explain the many cases where people in distress *are* helped.

One of the findings researchers have come up with is that the *more* the people who are present to intervene in an emergency, the less likely it is that the victim will receive help.

> The signs people will use for guidance include the actions of others, and this is one reason why their presence can inhibit helping. Each person thinks that if the others are not helping, or not even looking very concerned—probably due to trying to hide their *own* confusion—then "surely it can't be a genuine emergency, after all."...

> A further, and perhaps more important effect of the presence of other bystanders is "diffusion of responsibility" or the "Why me?" phenomenon. The more there are of you, the less is your *personal* responsibility for intervening, and the less the blame if you don't do so....
>
> However, once you have decided that help is definitely needed, an important factor is the feeling of competence to help....
>
> There is evidence that people are more likely to help victims whom they know, who are seen to be in severe need, or whom they see as not responsible for what has happened to them....
>
> Research has not uncovered the personality profile of the Good Samaritan, but some traits may be influential. In particular, possessing mature moral judgment, the tendency to feel in some way responsible for others' welfare, and the belief that one's fate lies within one's *own* control, all tend to increase helping....
>
> Apparently what is needed is simply to be *informed* about the way we think and the traps into which we can unwittingly fall.

It is only when some sensational instances of apathy and indifference are reported in the media, when a tragedy such as a murder or a rape that could have been averted takes place in full view of others without anyone lifting a finger to give timely help to the victim, that public conscience is aroused and people feel horrified. Yet, as against the callousness shown by some, there are enough instances where people do respond to a cry for help, even from strangers and at personal risk to the one who helps. Caring for others is more natural to human nature than its opposite. Yet such acts often go unnoticed.

The urge to talk for talk's sake is a compulsion with which all of us are familiar. Listening carefully, however, is a skill which is even more needed than that of fluent speech. Most of the time, we do not hear what people are saying, even though we think that we are, writes Bhupat Nansi in *The Times of India* for December 26, 1992. He outlines three reasons why we do not hear "normally":

> Thought moves faster than speech. Hence, we have plenty of "free" time when the other person speaks. In this "free" time, our mind keeps "chattering," always on other subjects.
>
> We unconsciously allow various colouring agents to corrupt the

speaker's words.

We have been trained in reading, writing and speaking, but not in listening.

The author's main emphasis is on how learning to listen contributes positively in the business world, but much of what he says is equally applicable to other walks of life. There is so much verbal communication today that one can no longer afford to have poor listening ability. He offers the following suggestions for developing the art of listening:

> When somebody comes to speak to you, put aside whatever else you are doing to listen. Concentrate on listening. Your ability to grasp will increase tremendously.
>
> Watch your stress level. Your attention to what other people say reduces if your stress level is high. The reverse is also true. If your stress level is low, you are relaxed and then you hear better.
>
> While speaking, people always add padding which appears related to the subject, but which does not add to the message. Always look for the centre. That is where the message lies.
>
> Put your belief system aside: Your upbringing and training give you a belief system. You carry religious, political and cultural beliefs with you all the time, and unconsciously take them to be the truth. Your prejudices, conventions and practices form a part of this system. This acts as a "colouring agent" to your hearing....You always hear through your system and what you receive is different from what was said. If you want to listen, put that belief system aside. Just listen—without any present frame—when somebody speaks.
>
> Ignore ego-language. The speaker's speech may be filled with emotion-expressions, boasts, insults, etc. Ignore them as you listen. They do not carry any message. If you get involved with these ego-expressions (and that will happen because of your own ego), then the listening will be ineffective.
>
> Remember, when you speak, you do not hear. Cultivate the habit of speaking less. This will increase tremendously your capacity to receive the other person's words.

For effective listening, inner silence is required. Productive or reflective silence is a quality that all of us should encourage and develop within ourselves.

HPB: The Extraordinary Life and Influence of Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, the Founder of the Modern Theosophical Movement, is the title of a new book by Sylvia Cranston (A Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam Book, New York, published this January). The author is no stranger to students of Theosophy, as she has already compiled and edited three books in collaboration with Joseph Head, and one with Carey Williams—all commendable works greatly clarifying the concept of reincarnation. Her latest volume is a well-documented biography of H.P.B., providing good factual reference material in its over 600 pages. It is the result of the author's lifelong devotion to Theosophy and her careful, painstaking efforts for more than ten years to make it a fitting tribute to the greatest Occultist of the 19th-20th century and the Founder of the Theosophical Movement of our era.

Many writers in the past have written biographies of the seemingly enigmatic life of H.P.B., some of which have been no more than blatant attacks on her; others written only for minting money by piecing together supposedly sensational material around her name; while only a few sincere students and admirers of hers have been able to do her a measure of justice. However, no biography of H.P.B. can ever be really "authentic"; even a creditable biography of hers cannot be written, since to know the real H.P.B. would necessarily require a thorough comprehension not only of her works—and for this even a lifetime would hardly suffice—but also of the Adept-Soul occupying the personality known to the world as H.P.B.

The seven sections of this book cover her childhood and early years in Russia, her wanderings in quest of knowledge, her meeting with her Master in 1851, the inauguration of the T.S. and its phenomenal spread over three continents within the span of a few years, the teachings she transmitted through her books and articles, totalling almost 10,000 pages, her passing away in 1891, and the final chapter emphasizing her influence and the tremendous impact of Theosophy during the past 100 years and more in the realms of science, religion, psychology, the arts, and other fields. There are innumerable quotations from H.P.B.'s writings, many of them from her letters and recently uncovered material. Tributes from her contemporaries and those who followed her, among them some leading lights of the day, as well as intimate accounts from several of

her own close associates and relatives, all go to provide a rare glimpse of this great Teacher occupying the body of our race and fulfilling her unique mission as the accredited Messenger of the Masters by revealing in her writings the esoteric wisdom of the ages, thus breaking the silence of centuries.

Complete with chronology, notes, bibliography and index, this exhaustive study should prove a welcome acquisition as a reliable reference work for many, and especially for earnest students of Theosophy.

In her dying moment she [H.P.B.] showed that her life had been spent for an idea, with full consciousness that in the eyes of the world it was Utopian, but in her own necessary for the race. She implored her friends not to allow her then ending incarnation to become a failure by the failure of the movement started and carried on with so much of suffering....

The aim and object of her life were to strike off the shackles forged by priestcraft for the mind of man. She wished all men to know that they are God in fact, and that as men they must bear the burden of their own sins, for no one else can do it. Hence she brought forward to the West the old Eastern doctrines of karma and reincarnation. She also desired that science should be brought back to the true ground where life and intelligence are admitted to be within and acting on and through every atom in the universe. Hence her object was to make religion scientific and science religious, so that the dogmatism of each might disappear.

Her life since 1875 was spent in the unremitting endeavour to draw within the Theosophical Society those who could work unselfishly to propagate an ethics and philosophy tending to realize the brotherhood of man by showing the real unity and essential non-separateness of every being. And her books were written with the declared object of furnishing the material for intellectual and scientific progress on those lines. The theoy of man's origin, powers and destiny brought forward by her, drawn from ancient Indian sources, places us upon a higher pedestal than that given by either religion or science, for it gives to each the possibility of developing the godlike powers within and of at last becoming a co-worker with nature.

—W. Q. Judge

THEOSOPHICAL PUBLICATIONS

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Isis Unveiled. A photographic facsimile of the original edition of 1877.
The Secret Doctrine. A facsimile of the original edition of 1888.
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The Theosophical Glossary
Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge
The Key to Theosophy
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